

Best of both worlds - Boating AND Kayaking

By Peter Townend

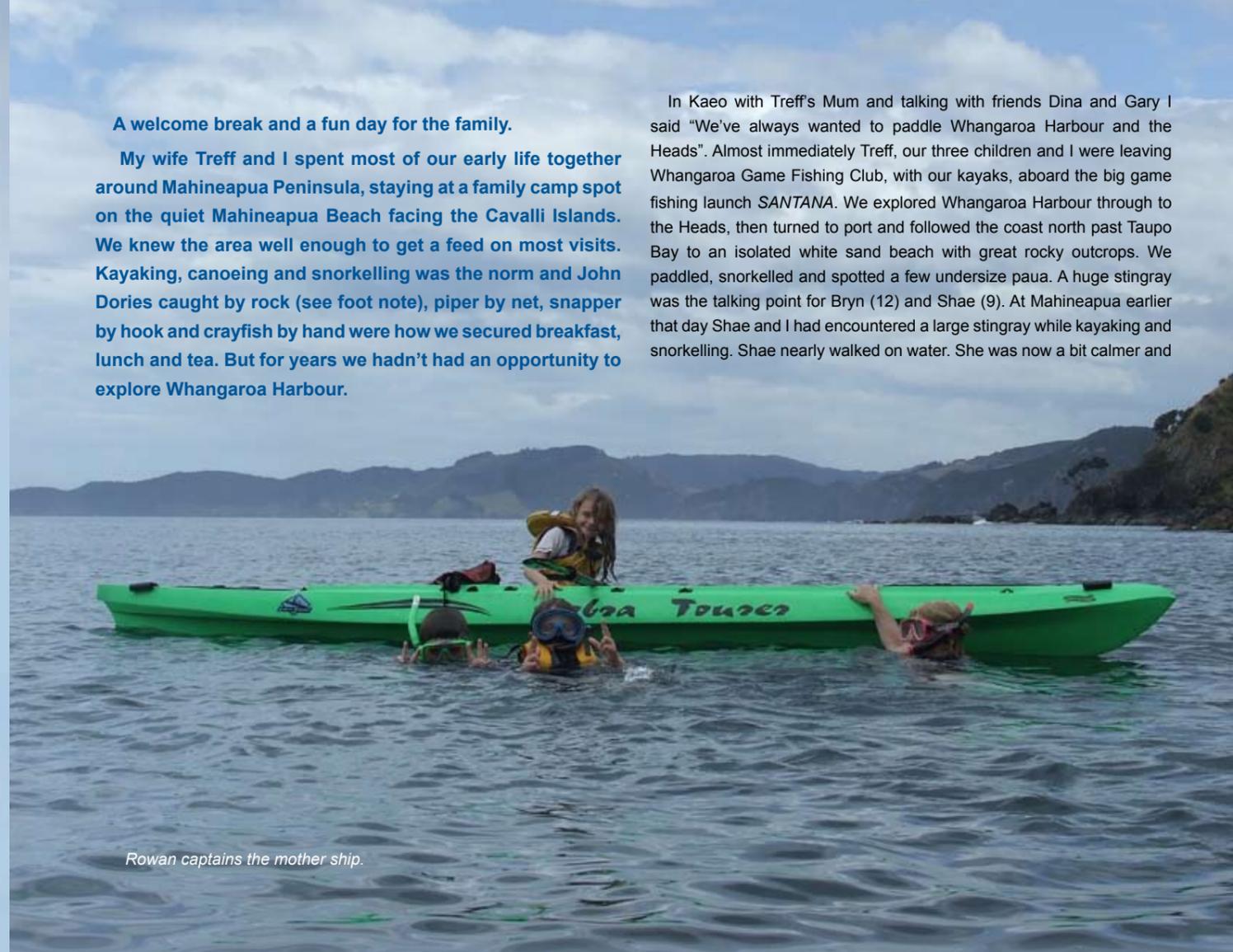


Gary & Dina - Owner operators of SANTANA.

A welcome break and a fun day for the family.

My wife Treff and I spent most of our early life together around Mahineapua Peninsula, staying at a family camp spot on the quiet Mahineapua Beach facing the Cavalli Islands. We knew the area well enough to get a feed on most visits. Kayaking, canoeing and snorkelling was the norm and John Dories caught by rock (see foot note), piper by net, snapper by hook and crayfish by hand were how we secured breakfast, lunch and tea. But for years we hadn't had an opportunity to explore Whangaroa Harbour.

In Kaeo with Treff's Mum and talking with friends Dina and Gary I said "We've always wanted to paddle Whangaroa Harbour and the Heads". Almost immediately Treff, our three children and I were leaving Whangaroa Game Fishing Club, with our kayaks, aboard the big game fishing launch *SANTANA*. We explored Whangaroa Harbour through to the Heads, then turned to port and followed the coast north past Taupo Bay to an isolated white sand beach with great rocky outcrops. We paddled, snorkelled and spotted a few undersize paua. A huge stingray was the talking point for Bryn (12) and Shae (9). At Mahineapua earlier that day Shae and I had encountered a large stingray while kayaking and snorkelling. Shae nearly walked on water. She was now a bit calmer and



Rowan captains the mother ship.

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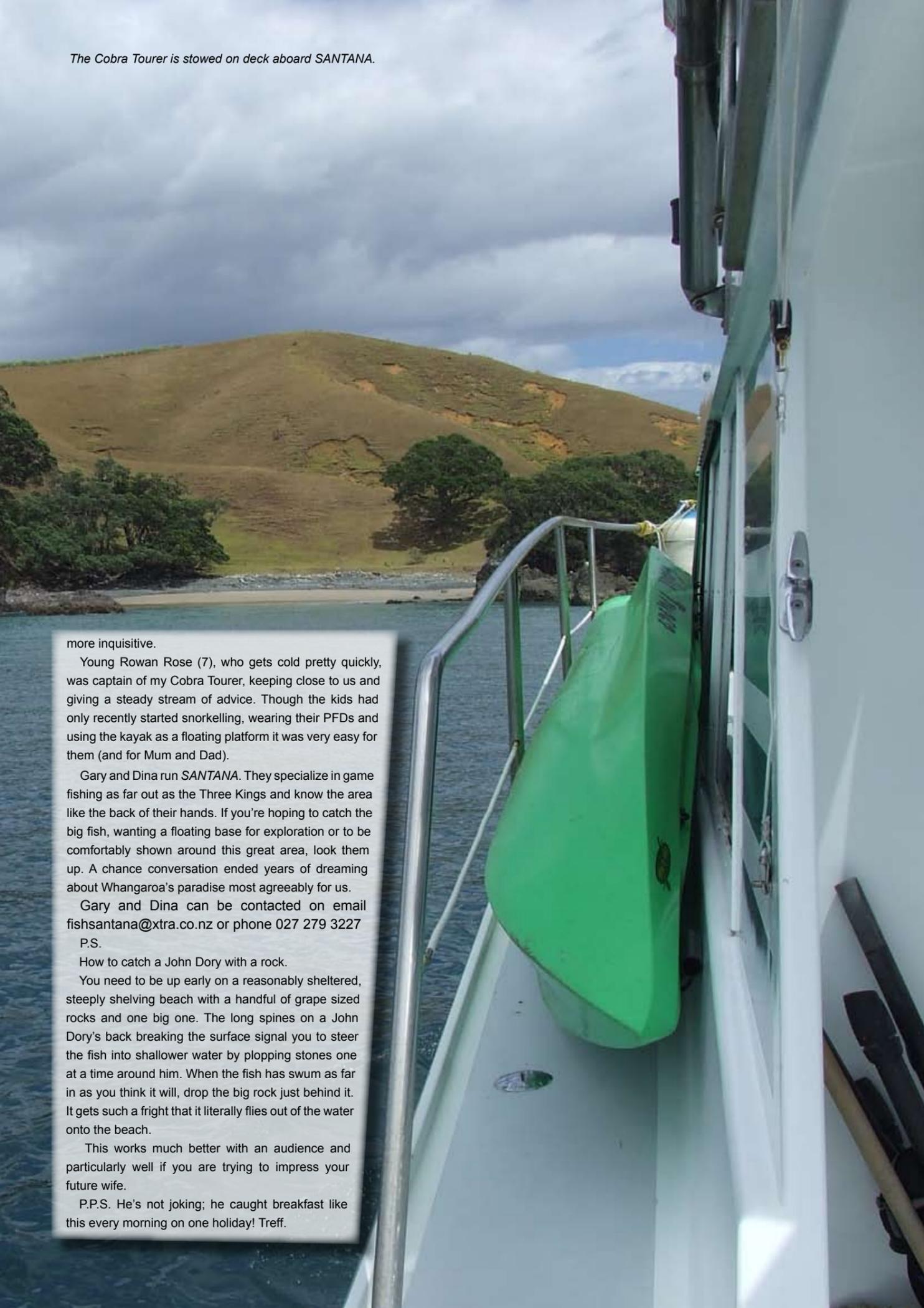
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The Cobra Tourer is stowed on deck aboard SANTANA.



more inquisitive.

Young Rowan Rose (7), who gets cold pretty quickly, was captain of my Cobra Tourer, keeping close to us and giving a steady stream of advice. Though the kids had only recently started snorkelling, wearing their PFDs and using the kayak as a floating platform it was very easy for them (and for Mum and Dad).

Gary and Dina run SANTANA. They specialize in game fishing as far out as the Three Kings and know the area like the back of their hands. If you're hoping to catch the big fish, wanting a floating base for exploration or to be comfortably shown around this great area, look them up. A chance conversation ended years of dreaming about Whangaroa's paradise most agreeably for us.

Gary and Dina can be contacted on email fishsantana@xtra.co.nz or phone 027 279 3227 P.S.

How to catch a John Dory with a rock.

You need to be up early on a reasonably sheltered, steeply shelving beach with a handful of grape sized rocks and one big one. The long spines on a John Dory's back breaking the surface signal you to steer the fish into shallower water by plopping stones one at a time around him. When the fish has swum as far in as you think it will, drop the big rock just behind it. It gets such a fright that it literally flies out of the water onto the beach.

This works much better with an audience and particularly well if you are trying to impress your future wife.

P.P.S. He's not joking; he caught breakfast like this every morning on one holiday! Treff.



Treff & Rowan chilling out aboard SANTANA.



Shae having a bit of play time.



Kayaks are great for getting ashore.



Marine biologist - Treff discussing the sea life with the kids.

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